



HEALTH ADVISORY # 74

Outbreaks of Respiratory Illness in Long-Term Care Facilities

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Long-Term Care Facilities and Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Marian L. Swinker, MD, MPH, Commissioner for Public Health and State Health Officer, WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES, LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES' MEDICAL DIRECTORS, COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) and local health departments are currently investigating 4 outbreaks of respiratory illness in long-term care facilities (LTCFs). Preliminary results suggest that human metapneumovirus, rhinovirus, and parainfluenza virus are among the etiologic agents. Respiratory outbreaks in LTCFs can be associated with substantial morbidity and mortality. Etiology usually includes viral or bacterial pathogens, or a combination.

In the setting of a respiratory illness outbreak in a long-term care facility:

- 1- All cases of pneumonia should be evaluated with chest-x-ray, white blood count and blood culture before starting antimicrobial therapy. If an adequate sputum sample can be collected, sputum gram stain and culture can be very helpful for making decisions about patient and outbreak management.
- 2- **Collect nasopharyngeal swabs** from 5 to 10 ill residents and staff within 48 hours of onset. West Virginia Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) provides PCR testing for most viral respiratory pathogens at no charge for LTCFs in case of an outbreak. Collection of multiple specimens improves yield.
- 3- Report respiratory outbreaks or clusters to your local health department.

Both treatment and control measures vary substantially depending on the etiologic agent. Laboratory diagnosis is crucial for management of respiratory outbreaks in LTCFs.

DIDE provides an outbreak toolkit to assist LTCFs with management of lower respiratory illness outbreaks at: <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/ob/Pages/LRTInLTCF.aspx>. Please report outbreaks or clusters of any illness immediately to your local health department. For further information, contact your local health department or visit the DIDE website at (www.dide.wv.gov) or contact DIDE at 304-558-5358 or 800-423-1271 ext. 1 (in WV).

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance, warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

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